



## *Google Hacks: 100 Industrial-Strength Tips & Tools*

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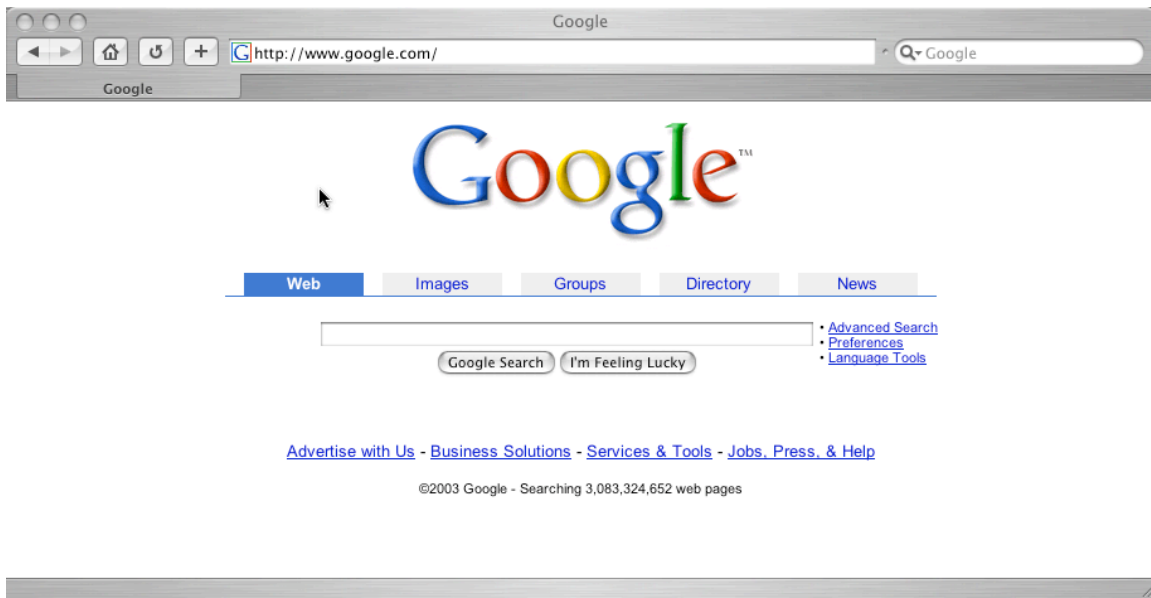
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### **Reviewed by Jonathan Jacobs**

It is getting harder and harder to remember life before Google (see image below). "Googling" has very quickly become a popular verb. I google at least a few times a day, for whatever has popped into my head, from the mundane (finding a recipe for a cookie I remember from childhood) to the work-related (sometimes choosing Google instead of a professional database such as Medline). Usually I can find what I'm looking for, or at least get a leg up on learning where else I must look. But sometimes I don't. On these occasions, I wonder if there was something else I could have done to craft a better search. How can I find that damned cookie?

Google started simple, as "just" an index of the web. Since then it has expanded greatly, allowing you to search for images, usenet, and the news. With these greater capabilities has come greater complexity. It's hard to grasp all you can do with Google. Did I mention that you can search a Mac-centric subset of google by going to <http://www.google.com.mac/>? Or that there's a "phonebook" function? Or that there are over a dozen custom syntax keywords to help you refine your search? For example, "intitle:" will search only the titles of web pages. Better searching comes from learning to use these powerful tools.



**Google homepage viewed in Safari**

Who is this book for? Short answer: everyone can get something out of it. When I first picked it up and began casually skimming through it, within the first few pages I learned something new ("Hack #6: Order Matters." Google will return different results for the same terms, depending on which ones you type when). However, once I got up to Hack #40, I realized that I was now swimming beyond my depth. Here are the heavy-duty hacks -- a look into the application programming interface (API), the very guts, of the search engine. These tips are more appropriate for the serious web programmer than the casual googler. The last 2/3 of the book is in this vein. Here you can learn about programming the API with Perl, Python, Java, PHP or even C# and .NET to integrate the power of Google into your own web site. This is obviously not for the casual user.

But these chapters are certainly worth skimming, for there are a few neat jewels buried in there, such as "Hack #85: Instant Messaging Google." If you really want to, you can use AOL's Instant Messenger to search, once you've downloaded the appropriate modules.

If you are a fan of practical jokes, games and just plain old weird stuff, then Hacks #86-92 are for you. Learn how screw up any search so it returns no results. Or see if you can come up with a two word query that returns only one result. (This is called "Google whacking." It's actually pretty tough.) Whatever you do, you've got to try out the "Google Mirror" at <http://www.alltooflat.com/geeky/elgoog>

The best thing about this book, like most O'Reilly books, is how well written it is. Even the geekiest hacks are almost accessible, and throughout, the authors try to recount some of the history of Google, and give a feel for the community that has grown around it in just the few years it's been around. They also take great pains to remind the reader that Google is NOT a library, it is just a tool to find answers, and that the ultimate search resource still lives between your ears.

Oh, by the way, I finally found the cookie recipe (five of them, even) thanks to (among others) Hacks #5 ("Getting around the 10 word limit"), 13 ("Using full-word wildcards") and #15 ("Using Spelling") which reminded me not to assume everyone will spell any given word correctly, especially one that has been transliterated from another language.

#### Bowtie Cookies (Kichel)

5 Eggs

1/2 Teaspoon Vanilla extract

3/4 Cup Vegetable oil

1 Cup White sugar

2 1/3 Cups All-purpose flour

1 Teaspoon Salt

#### Directions

1 Place the eggs, vanilla, vegetable oil, 1 teaspoon of the sugar, and the flour and salt in the bowl of an electric mixer fitted with the paddle and blend on low speed until incorporated. Then beat on high speed for 5 minutes.

- 2 Remove the paddle and scrape the batter down the sides of the bowl. Rest the dough in the bowl, covered, until soft and spongy outside, about 1 hour. Then remove it from the bowl, it will be sticky, and make a ball out of it.
- 3 Preheat oven to 350 degrees F (175 degrees C) and grease 2 baking sheets.
- 4 Sprinkle a work surface with the 1 cup sugar, about 1/8 inch deep. Place the dough in the center, flatten it slightly with a rolling pin and sprinkle the dough liberally with sugar.
- 5 Roll the dough to a thickness of 1/8 inch, a rectangle about 18 by 12 inches. Then, using a pastry cutter or a dull knife, cut out the dough into strips 3/4 inch wide and 2 inches long. Lift each strip, twist in the middle to make a bow tie and place on the cookie sheets, leaving 1/2 inch between each strip.
- 6 Bake the cookies for 25 to 30 minutes on the middle rack of the oven, until the cookies are hard to the touch on all corners and golden brown. (If using 1 oven, put the cookie sheets on the top and center racks, then switch them midway). To test for doneness, break a cookie in half. If it is doughy or too soft, it is not done yet. Return to the oven for a few minutes more.

**Rating: Four out of Five stars**

- +lots of great hits and tips for using Google, well written, provides Google history
- two-thirds of book very technical in nature and not for average user